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Kennedy Death File to Be Opened

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18 (Reuters) — The Central Intelligence Agency said today that it would make public only about 22,000 pages of documents related to the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, less that 10 percent of the secret assassination documents the agency is believed to have.

The relatively small size of the release disappointed researchers.

"They're stalling, clean and simple," James Lesar, a Washington lawyer who heads the nonprofit Assassination Archives and Research Center, said in a telephone interview. "Why do they have to hold back? It just makes everybody more and more suspicious of their actions."

The document disclosure is mandated by the J.F.K. Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, which requires that virtually all relevant material in the Government's possession be sent to the National Archives, to be made public by Monday.

Lacking a Review Panel

Under the act, the release of certain documents may be postponed for specified reasons. The law sets up a five-member review board with the power to require Government offices to release additional records.

Creation of the panel is long overdue. The records act, which President George Bush signed into law last Oct. 26, required the President to appoint the board within 90 days. That would have been Jan. 23, five days after President Clinton took office.

By law, the review panel would grant "postponements" only when, for example, disclosure would uncloak "an intelligence agent whose identity currently requires protection," or confidential sources who might be harmed if their identities were made public.

Daniel Alcorn, a lawyer who is a board member of the Assassination Archives and Research Center, said the amount of material being withheld by the C.I.A. reinforced the need for Mr. Clinton to appoint the review panel.

"It's very much overdue, and I don't understand why they haven't done it," he said in a telephone interview. The White House did not return a phone call seeking comment.

More national news appears on page C19.